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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001334

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IZ](#) [IS](#) [JO](#) [UNRWA](#)

SUBJECT: PRM PDAS GREENE DISCUSSES PALESTINIAN REFUGEES
WITH UNHCR AND UNRWA

REF: AMMAN 1078

Classified By: A/DCM Doug Silliman per 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary and Comment: In a February 16 meeting with PRM PDAS Greene, UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Morjane requested U.S. assistance in finding durable solutions for 345 Iraqi-Palestinians in Jordan's Ruweished refugee camp. Morjane -- to the surprise of the UNHCR Jordan representative and UNRWA Deputy ComGen AbuZayd -- asked that the U.S. consider resettling the Iraqi-Palestinians. AbuZayd promised to include the issue in upcoming UNHCR-UNRWA consultations, which also will address registration and assistance issues for Iraqi-Palestinians and possibly registration for Palestinians outside the region. Given the political ramifications of such a change in Palestinian refugee policy, we again recommend the Department not consider Palestinians for resettlement. In a February 15 meeting with AbuZayd, Greene also discussed UNRWA succession, section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act, the Operations Support Officer program and an upcoming review of UNRWA emergency programs. End summary and comment.

12. (U) PRM PDAS Richard Greene met with UNRWA Deputy Commissioner General Karen AbuZayd on February 15. PRM/ANE Deputy Director Larry Bartlett and Refugee Coordinator Joan Polaschik (notetaker) also attended the meeting. PDAS Greene held a separate meeting with UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Kamel Morjane February 16 on the margins of a UNHCR meeting on Iraq (Iraq meeting reported septel).

UNHCR-UNRWA Cooperation;
Solutions for Iraqi-Palestinians?

13. (SBU) UNRWA Deputy ComGen Karen Abu Zayd told PRM PDAS Greene that she held an initial meeting with UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Kamel Morjane on February 15 to outline possible cooperation on Palestinian refugee issues. While most of the cooperation will address Iraqi-Palestinian issues (UNHCR is responsible for the registration and care of an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 Palestinian refugees in Iraq), the two refugee agencies will also begin a dialogue on more general issues such as registration and assistance practices. She noted that as part of UNRWA's move toward individual -- rather than family -- registration, UNRWA might consider asking UNHCR offices to register Palestinian refugees outside the region. The two agencies are scheduled to hold working level consultations during the week of February 22.

14. (C) In a February 16 meeting with PDAS Greene, UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Kamel Morjane requested U.S. support in finding solutions for the 345 Iraqi-Palestinians remaining in Jordan's Ruweished refugee camp (ref). First, UNHCR seeks U.S. support in urging the Government of Israel to allow these Iraqi-Palestinians to "return" to the West Bank and Gaza. Acknowledging that the Israelis were unlikely to accede to this request, Morjane then asked the U.S. to consider resettling these Iraqi-Palestinians in the United States. Morjane told Greene that UNHCR realizes the political difficulties of finding durable solutions for Palestinian refugees, but said UNHCR has a morale imperative to find solutions for this group. UNHCR could not expect Jordan to accept more Palestinian refugees and could not force this group to return to Iraq. Resettlement outside the region seemed to be the only durable solution.

15. (C) In a follow-on February 17 conversation, UNRWA Deputy ComGen told refcoord that Morjane had not raised this issue in their meeting and she was surprised he was considering the possibility of resettling Palestinians from an UNRWA area of operation. She commented that resettlement of Palestinians outside the region would be interpreted as a conspiracy to solve the Palestinian refugee question outside a negotiated political settlement, with serious political ramifications. Moreover, under long-standing agreement between the two agencies, UNHCR considers for resettlement from UNRWA areas of operation (e.g., Jordan) only individual Palestinians with exceptional vulnerabilities. AbuZayd said she would add this issue to the agenda of the upcoming UNHCR-UNRWA consultations and brief refcoord after the meetings.

UNRWA Succession

16. (C) AbuZayd confirmed to Greene that UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen intends to step down after his current term expires in February 2005. She cautioned, however, that Hansen could change his mind if he believes the U.S. is pushing for his ouster. AbuZayd said Hansen was taken aback by recent comments from the UNSYG's office that the U.S. would not want Hansen to remain in office for another term and asked specifically that AbuZayd probe U.S. intentions. Assuring AbuZayd that the U.S. would not launch an overt campaign to oust Hansen, Greene noted that the U.S. nonetheless prefers that Hansen's third term become his last. AbuZayd confirmed that she plans to stay on as Deputy ComGen until August 2005, to ensure continuity during the transition to a new ComGen.

Section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act

17. (SBU) Greene told AbuZayd that the U.S. continues to be concerned that UNRWA take all possible measures to ensure that no assistance is provided to terrorists, as stipulated in section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act. Referring to a February 6 letter from PRM A/S Dewey to UNRWA ComGen Hansen, Greene explained that the U.S. strongly encourages UNRWA to take a broader view of what constitutes an act of terrorism, particularly in the context of "work accidents," explosions in refugee shelters that result from presumed bomb-making activities. The technical explanation provided in UNRWA's November 2003 letter to A/S Dewey simply was not sufficient. Greene suggested that the Department's legal advisors should speak directly to UNRWA legal counsel. AbuZayd responded that UNRWA took the U.S. concerns seriously and had already drafted a response to A/S Dewey's letter. However, she urged the U.S. to look at UNRWA's policies and practices rather than its technical interpretation of U.S. law and UN conventions on terrorism.

Operations Support Officers Program

18. (U) Explaining that the manager's report to the FY04 omnibus appropriations bill urged the Department to provide funds to make UNRWA's Operations Support Officers (OSO) part of the agency's regular programs, Greene asked AbuZayd why the agency had not done so. Greene explained that the U.S. Government found the OSO program to be an effective oversight tool for the agency and hoped that it could be continued beyond the current emergency in the West Bank and Gaza. AbuZayd responded that limits on UNRWA international staff members, set by UN Headquarters, preclude any regularization of the OSO program. UNRWA international staff positions for its regular programs currently are limited to 110. UNRWA employs an additional 43 internationals beyond the UN HQ limit (including 14 OSOs funded by the U.S.) but with the caveat that they are short-term positions funded by individual donors. Regularization of the OSO program would require UN HQ to raise the limit on UNRWA international staff.

Review of UNRWA Emergency Programs

19. (U) Noting that there is a large, global demand on limited U.S. emergency assistance funds, Greene informed AbuZayd that the U.S. Government plans an expanded monitoring mission to review UNRWA emergency programs. Tentatively planned for April, the mission will look at UNRWA emergency programs in the West Bank and Gaza, focusing on program prioritization, identification of beneficiaries and the programs' impact. AbuZayd welcomed the mission, noting that it could complement an EC review of West Bank programs and the UK-financed external review of all UNRWA programs.

Comment

10. (C) We -- as well as the UNHCR Jordan Representative -- were surprised by Morjane's proposal to resettle Iraqi-Palestinians from their temporary place of asylum in Jordan. UNHCR resettlement of a group of Palestinian refugees would constitute a departure from existing Palestinian refugee policies and, in the context of Israeli PM Sharon's statements about unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, would likely be viewed in the region as something far more significant than a humanitarian solution for a small number of refugees. We again recommend that the Department not consider Iraqi-Palestinians for the U.S. resettlement program.

11. (U) PDAS Greene cleared this message.

12. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
GNEHM